

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Organized 1884

Incorporated by the Congress 1889

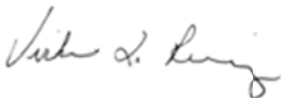
June 16, 2015

Governor Terry Branstad
Mary Cownie
Director, Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
Chris Kramer
Deputy Director, Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
via email: terry.branstad@iowa.gov, mary.cownie@iowa.gov, chris.kramer@iowa.gov

Dear Governor Branstad, Ms. Cownie, and Mr. Kramer:

I write on behalf of the American Historical Association—the leading organization of historians in the United States—to express our grave concern about reductions in resources for the research collections at the State Historical Society of Iowa. An early and active proponent of state archives laws in the United States, the AHA remains committed to the preservation of our heritage, and to its accessibility. We understand that a shortage of financial resources has forced the state to make some difficult financial choices, and that in such situations, everyone claims that their particular activity is sacrosanct. The archives and research collections at the State Historical Society of Iowa, however, tell the story of all Iowans. Genealogists, students, historians, journalists: all require access to these vital records to participate in the preservation of the state’s heritage and the practical use of its past. Beyond the interests of historical researchers, a wide variety of civic-minded Iowans depend on open access to archives. Teachers, lawyers, real estate developers, leaders of neighborhood associations—all rely not only on the vital records housed in the State Historical Society of Iowa, but on the expert advice of its archivists. The records of any government represent the heritage of its people, and can serve that role only when its citizens have access to consult those records. Closing the doors to the archives would represent a devastating blow not only to historians, genealogists, and others with an interest in the past, but also the state’s policymakers and leaders who need a solid understanding of the past to help shape Iowa’s future. I urge you to allocate resources that will enable this vital service to remain open and accessible to all.

Sincerely,



Vicki L. Ruiz
President



James R. Grossman
Executive Director